IN-HOUSE PRO BONO IN PRACTICE PROFILE: MERCK & CO., INC.
October 2026

Merck & Co., Inc. (Merck), known as MSD outside the US and Canada, proudly collaborates with organizations that provide access to equal justice to underserved and underrepresented communities around the world. For over thirty years, attorneys and allied professionals across the Offices of the General Counsel have devoted thousands of hours of time to providing legal assistance globally to those in need.

The company's pro bono program began in 1994 when a group of attorneys and legal staff piloted a project to assist low-income individuals in obtaining free legal services. Since then, the program now has over 200 volunteers worldwide who provide free legal services across a wide range of topics.

General Program Information	
Offices with Legal Staff	HQ: Rahway, NJ; 3 others in US; 41 outside the US
Size of Legal Department	Globally, the legal department consists of 300 – 400 employees, including 200+ attorneys.
Pro Bono Leadership Structure	The Pro Bono Program is administered by the Pro Bono Committee, led by the General Counsel. The Committee is led by the Pro Bono Program Chair, and supported by the Pro Bono Program Coordinator, Pro Bono Administrator, International Pro Bono Committee Chair, and Coordinators from various company locations around the globe.
Pro Bono Policy	A formal written pro bono policy was adopted in 2008 and is revised on a tri-annual basis, most recently in 2026.
Mandatory Pro Bono	Participation in the pro bono program is strictly voluntary but strongly encouraged, with annual participation and hourly goals set for attorneys and all department staff.
Recognitions/Awards	The program recognizes volunteers through awards, ceremonies, and recognition at department meetings. The company has received numerous awards for its pro bono work, including the TrustLaw In-House Legal Team of the Year Award in 2026 and the CPBO Pro Bono Partner Award in 2023.
Tracking Pro Bono	The company tracks pro bono participation using a custom-built "Pro Bono Time Tracker" app, with data compiled and analyzed in a PowerBI dashboard. Data points recorded include project and administrative participation, hours provided, current role and geographical information.

Partnerships	The company collaborates with legal services providers and law firms on pro bono work in and outside the U.S.
Legal Staff Involvement	Allied professionals across the Offices of the General Counsel are encouraged to participate in the company's pro bono program, with several volunteer opportunities available for those who do not hold a legal license.
Pro Bono Interest Areas and Projects	
Immigration and refugee support	Volunteers assist immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and other displaced populations through a range of legal and educational initiatives. Support may include legal research, document preparation, application assistance, client interviews, know-your-rights education, and direct representation. These efforts help individuals and families navigate complex immigration processes, understand their legal rights, and pursue pathways to stability and protection.
Veterans and first responders	Volunteers provide legal support to veterans, active-duty service members, and first responders facing civil legal challenges. Areas of assistance include benefits advocacy, discharge-related matters, estate planning, legal intake, records review, and other issues affecting long-term stability and well-being. Volunteers contribute through research, document preparation, client support, and legal guidance designed to help individuals access available services and protections.
Housing, homelessness, youth, and family support	Volunteers support individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity, homelessness, economic hardship, or other challenges affecting stability and well-being. Pro bono opportunities may involve housing-related legal assistance, family law support, access to identification and essential documents, legal education, resource development, and community outreach. Volunteers help strengthen access to services and legal resources for vulnerable youth, families, and communities.
Research, education, and nonprofit support	Volunteers provide legal research, policy analysis, educational resource development, and transactional support to nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, and community-focused initiatives. Projects may include drafting legal guidance, developing informational materials, conducting comparative research, reviewing policies, and advising organizations on governance and operational matters. These efforts help strengthen nonprofit capacity and advance broader access-to-justice and community-impact goals.

Consumer protection and financial stability	Volunteers support individuals and families facing consumer and financial challenges that may threaten their economic stability and well-being. Pro bono opportunities may include assistance with bankruptcy matters, debt-related issues, consumer rights education, financial document preparation, and access to legal resources. These efforts help promote financial stability and increase access to legal resources for underserved communities.
Civil engagement and voter rights	Volunteers support initiatives that promote civic participation and access to democratic processes. Opportunities may include voter rights education, election-related assistance, hotline support, legal research, and other efforts designed to help individuals understand and exercise their rights.
Identity documentation and legal records	Volunteers assist individuals in securing, correcting, or restoring essential identity and legal documents. Support may include applications, record corrections, legal name changes, birth certificate assistance, and other documentation-related matters that help individuals access employment, housing, education, healthcare, and public services.
Lessons Learned	
Start small.	Growth should be gradual. The program started with a small group of lawyers, which enabled the pro bono program to address any unforeseen obstacles before expanding the program to multiple offices, multiple pro bono collaborating organizations, and involving hundreds of members of the department.
Develop infrastructure at the outset.	The pro bono committee created pro bono letterhead, dedicated phone lines specifically for pro bono, and set up a P.O. box. The company also developed a committee structure that makes sense for the company and department—a point of contact at each office, with one central committee governing the larger program.
Offer opportunities of interest to members of the department.	The company regularly surveys the legal department to ensure that projects reflect the interests of the members of the department. Offering meaningful, interesting projects encourages participation new projects are added regularly added to reflect participants' interests.
Thank volunteers for their work.	To inspire participants to volunteer and encourage continued participation, it is important that volunteers receive recognition for their work— from both the clients they serve as well as department and company leadership.

Integrate pro bono and corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts.	The legal department maximizes its impact on the community by integrating its pro bono and CSR efforts. This has led the company to provide funding for legal services organizations with which the legal department partners.

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